

Juniper Green WHOLE SERVICE 1

Matthew 28:16-20 - Go, and Make Disciples (Trinity Sunday)

Sermon - Go, And Make Disciples

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. **17** When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. **18** Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Intro

I wonder what you think of when you hear the word "commissioning?"

Maybe it conjures up various thoughts and images for you being at work, when you are commissioned to write a report or an investigation.

Maybe you think of soldiers in the army being commissioned.

Or maybe it even brings you to sporting events like the World Cup, in the first match, as the players walk onto the field - there is a sense of representation of one's own country, of commissioning.

For me, I was brought up in Church and in Sunday School, so this passage is the first thing I think of when I hear the word "commission."

However, I always thought of it in a strange, mystical sort of way, as you do:

I had this sense that Jesus summoned His followers together like an army drill sergeant, pointed His arms at them in almost a Harry Potter-like fashion, and said the words "*now go and make disciples of every nation*" in a Barack Obama styled speech like it was too good to be true, before being swept up in a heavenly cloud, saying "Good Luck, I'll be praying for you all!"

Well, the word **commissioning** means to

"order or authorise the production of something"

or to *"bring something newly produced into working condition."*

It is with this emphasis of bringing about the new that we look at this morning with the birth of the disciples becoming apostles,

being sent out to "spread the Word" and "preach the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ," the "Gospel of the Kingdom" and the extension of Christ's rule and reign.

It is with this emphasis that we look at Jesus' authority to authorise, and with the coming of the Spirit to empower those new apostles to mission, and our role today as believers in Jesus.

Background to the Passage

Last Sunday was Pentecost Sunday, where we celebrated the birthday of the Church, where the promised Holy Spirit was poured out on all believers.

But now on this Trinity Sunday we go back 7 weeks to the Resurrection of Jesus.

Matthew's Gospel does not report the resurrection appearances in Jerusalem as Luke and John's do.

In this morning's passage we see Matthew's only account of a meeting between the risen Jesus and his eleven disciples.

At the beginning of chapter 28 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, two faithful followers of Jesus, are at the tomb of Jesus.

There they see what Matthew describes as a *"great earthquake."*

An angel of the Lord descended from heaven, rolling back the stone.

Could you imagine what it must've been like being there? For both the women and the guards?

Matthew describes his amazing appearance as being like "lightning" and his clothing as *"white as snow."*

This angel would tell the women that *"Jesus has risen, as He said (He would)."*

Now that the two women had encountered this angel, their task was to go and tell this to the eleven disciples:

"Jesus has risen - and He is going to meet you!"

But, on their way to do this, they would meet Jesus Himself.

There, they would "worship Him" (v9) as Saviour and Lord.

They give a true report of the occasion, resisting the temptation that the guard offered in what we see in verses 11-15.

Instead, the two women acted in faithfulness, in obedience, telling where the disciples were to go - to the mountain, where what is known as the **Great Commission** would take place.

vv16-17

Obedience

It is in this obedience to the command passed on through the two Mary's that the disciples *"went into Galilee, to the mountain that Jesus had told them/appointed them."*

Looking at the geography, this is a place the disciples were familiar with in Galilee.

Whilst the other Gospels mostly focus to say about Jesus' ministry in Judea,

Matthew's Gospel focuses on Galilee, apart from the brief appearance here to the two Mary's here.

And so in v17, we read that the disciples - *"worshiped Him"* - as the two Mary's did in v9 - they recognised Jesus for who He is - *"God with them."*

Some doubt, however, despite seeing Him face to face.

We are not entirely sure whether this is just a gathering of the eleven disciples or more. It probably is a larger group, as in v10, Jesus says “go and tell my brothers” which could well refer to a larger group of followers rather than the eleven disciples. In 1 Corinthians 15:6, Paul also tells us “*Then He (Jesus) appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time.*”

Unbelief

However small or large the gathering, though, we **are** told that *some doubted*. Rather than a direct opposition of Jesus with unbelief, they have what could be described as a “*littleness of faith.*”

Some doubt. They are hesitant. They are still in shock over the death of Jesus. In John’s Gospel, in chapter 20, we have a clearer account of Jesus showing His wounds to the disciples, specifically to Thomas, who even after the ten disciples had told him Jesus had risen, still did not believe.

Why did some doubt? Perhaps they were just not sure this was really Jesus. This would not be the first time this happened, either.

Luke’s Gospel gives us the account of Jesus appearing to two men on the road to Emmaus. They did not recognise Him there.

Similarly, in John 21, the disciples do not recognise the risen Jesus on the shore. And this is also something that throughout the Gospels is seen from the disciples and many people over and over again. Weakness. Doubt. Lack of or Littleness of Faith.

Worship

Worship is the natural response to seeing Jesus as He really is - to declaring Him as the beloved.

Worship is also viewing ourselves as Jesus sees us - also as the beloved.

And worship is also seeing others as Jesus sees them - as the beloved.

As the songwriter Matt Redman writes, “*When we face up to the glory of God, we find ourselves face down in worship.*”

Jesus is the Glory of God. He is the revealed Son, Immanuel, God with us and for us. He is the only One, and when we see Him face to face - we worship.

We sung earlier, “Blessed be the Name of the Lord” - and of course, sung worship is one of many ways we can give honour and worship to God.

When we declare God’s goodness, sing of His mercy, breathe in His grace, celebrate His love and honour Him as our Holy God, we begin to see Him for who He truly is and His love for us.

vv18-20

All Authority

But that is not what the atmosphere is like here with this group - it is an atmosphere of both doubt and worship that Jesus addresses the group, declaring to them:

“all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.”

Jesus declares His deity in His risen state.

No longer is He a “man of sorrows, stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted” (Isa 53:3-4).

He is the risen Jesus. He has supreme authority throughout the universe, and this is given to Him from the Father.

Jesus shows He is one with God the Father and equal to the Father in deity.

But as well as that, He then goes on to tell His followers there gathered - *“go and make disciples of all nations,”* it is the implications for those who follow Jesus.

The implications of encountering Jesus and seeing Him as He is leads to worship of Him and the mission of the Church.

They would received authority from the only One who can give that to them - Jesus.

Our Mission - All Ages

Because He has all authority, Jesus is the only One who can commission His followers.

Jesus is the only One who can say *“Go!”*

Jesus is the only One who can say *“make disciples of all nations.”*

Jesus is the only One who can make this “something new”, this commissioning to “all peoples, of every tribe, nation and tongue.”

In His authority, Jesus *“brings something newly produced into working condition.”*

Jesus is calling people to Himself, to commit to Him, to serve Him, to give there all to Him.

If this gathering was over 500 strong, can you imagine the age range represented there?

Surely there would've been little children, to whom Jesus would say “come unto Me.”

Surely there would've been young adults, parents, grandparents - among them old men who would go on to “dream dreams and see visions” when the Holy Spirit would be poured out on the day of Pentecost, as the prophet Joel would prophesy.

This is the Great Commission, the whole body, young and old,

each with their own part to play -

no part too young or insignificant,

no part too old or over the hill,

no part having made too may mistakes or having missed the boat.

No part out of the reach of God's grace. No part unable to receive God's mercy.

No part unable to receive God's love.

Each person would be given authority from the Son - the only One who could give the authority.

It was **only** through His death and resurrection that this was possible.

And then they would have the Power. They would go out in the Power of the Holy Spirit.

Hudson Taylor - Apostle of China

Some of you will perhaps be familiar with the story of Hudson Taylor, the missionary to China and founder of OMF.

He was an amazing man of God who inspired thousands of other missionaries all over the world and continues to inspire many people to this day.

Speaking in England, this is what he said about mission:

"Can all the Christians in England sit with folded arms while these multitudes in China are perishing - for lack of knowledge - for lack of that knowledge which England possesses so richly? There the Lord conquered my unbelief, and I surrendered myself to God for this service. I told him that all responsibility as to the issues and consequences must rest with Him; that as his servant it was mine to obey and to follow him."

Hudson Taylor lived out the Great Commission with great zeal.

Yes, to speak in total honesty, many/most of us will not reach the level of influence in the way that he has.

But that doesn't mean that we have to - God has called each of us, in our community, in our workplaces, in our families, to represent His love to the world.

And let us rest assured that Jesus will always be with us. If I can again quote Hudson Taylor - *"I have found that there are three stages in every great work of God: first, it is impossible, then it is difficult, then it is done."*

Trinitarian Authority & Promise

It is with this authority that we are sent out - to make disciples of all nations.

We've established that these verses focus on the divinity of Jesus - that He is on equal par with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, who would come in greater power at Pentecost.

It is to the focus on making disciples we close with - this is the work of the Kingdom of God.

This is for the extension of Jesus' rule and reign until He returns again.

The followers of Jesus here are given three things to do in order to make disciples - **firstly**, to go. How will we make disciples unless we go?

How are we to see our Churches filled with young people, families and all other age groups unless we go into the world and show the love of Jesus?

Yes, we must pray, we must commit to the daily disciplines of the Christian life - but here Jesus says *"therefore go!"*

And so we must go, realising we have the Power of God living inside us, and also ask God that He would fill us afresh with that Power daily.

Secondly, the followers of Jesus are to be baptised.

Baptism has always been part of the Church - we have no knowledge of a time when the Church was without or unsure of it.

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We are to take this at face value as a definite command of Jesus, not that baptism equates to salvation itself, but a sign of blessing, a sign of covenant.

Thirdly, the followers of Jesus are to teach the commands of Jesus.

Remember the road to Emmaus from Luke 24?

Jesus interpreted the Scriptures, and spoke all things concerning Him.

We live in a post-truth society today where “**my version**” of the truth is as valid as the person who believes in the holy hippopotamus or the flying spaghetti monster.

I once saw a debate on YouTube between a Christian apologist and an atheist who really did use that!

We as Christians all have an important role to know the Good News for ourselves, and do as 1 Peter 3:15 tell us:

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect”

And so this is the Great Commission - the extension of God’s Kingdom.

We as followers of Jesus are made to “carry on His mission of proclaiming and demonstrating His Kingdom and Rulership.”

And Jesus finishes with a promise for us - that He will always be with us.

Until Jesus’ 2nd coming,

His followers are to demonstrate the works of the Kingdom that Jesus did on earth, to proclaim the Gospel of Kingdom - repentance of sin and salvation in Christ alone,

and to live out the Kingdom in their daily lives, from the mundane tasks to work to family to lifestyle,

and to do all this in the Power of the Spirit, freely given to those who ask of it.

The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby said this last week at the Pentecost service on BBC One - its brilliant by the way, worth checking out on iPlayer:

“the strongest Power in the world is the love of Jesus Christ - it is invisible to most rulers, unheard of by most communicators, it has no Twitter account and does not show up on Facebook, but it has overcome more nations than the greatest armies, changed more lives than the finest orators, drawn more people into true community than all the social media has or ever could do. It breaks down barriers between races, genders and societies, it tears down the frontiers between nations. It is this love which daily transforms our lives. We must be the difference and know that God loves us - forever.”

Acts 4:12 - ‘Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved’

Let us pray.

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Lord, give us the grace to follow Your commands,
The awareness of Your Presence in greater measure each and every day.
Fill us with the fire of Your Love,
That we may serve You in the every day - following the Great Commission.
May You do something new in us today,
That new thing - *something newly produced into working condition*,
So that our sharing of the Good News would be with courage and without fear,
That our desire would be to see more come to know You,
May we know that You are with us, You are for us,
And You go before us.
In Jesus Name we pray,
Amen.